



SENATOR ROBERT D. GARTON

serving district 41: bartholomew and johnson counties

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Bills on the Move

BUDGET

HB 1001, the biennial budget, is currently undergoing hearings in the Senate Appropriations Committee. The budget, as passed by the House of Representatives, balances the budget and ends the state's structural deficit in Fiscal Year 2007. This budget provides a \$175 million increase for schools and simplifies the school funding formula. HB 1001 currently holds Medicaid increases at 3 percent and appropriates funds to hire 600 more child welfare caseworkers in the state.

Passed the House 52-48 and is being heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee

TAX POLICY

SB 1 is a major economic development bill that contains many ideas from Governor Mitch Daniels. The bill includes sales tax exemptions for research and development equipment and extends Venture Capital Investment Tax Credits. The bill also addresses Property Tax Investment Deductions.

Passed the Senate by a vote of 50-0

HB 1004 creates a tax amnesty program for people and businesses that owe back taxes to the state. The bill would provide an eight-week period in which outstanding taxes could be paid without late fees or interest. The program could raise more than \$250 million for the state.

Passed Tax and Fiscal Policy Committee 10-0

TRAFFIC SAFETY

SB 7 removes an exception in current Indiana law that doesn't require drivers of vehicles with truck license plates to wear a seatbelt. At this time, Indiana and Georgia are the only two states with this loophole. The bill also requires passengers in all vehicles to wear a safety belt. This measure passed the Senate last year, but died in the House of Representatives.

Passed Senate 34-16

PUBLIC POLICY

SJR 7 begins the process for a Constitutional amendment that defines marriage as being between one man and one woman. Constitutional amendments must pass through two separately elected General Assemblies and then be voted on in a statewide referendum. If SJR 7 passes this year, and again in 2007 or 2008, it will appear on the statewide ballot in the 2008 general election.

Passed the Senate 42-8

EDUCATION

SB 231 changes cutoff birth date for kindergarten enrollment from July 1 to August 1.

Passed the Senate 34-15

JUDGES

SB 363 grants full-time judges and justices an automatic cost-of-living pay increase each year in which other state employees get pay raises and the General Assembly does not grant an additional pay raise.

Passed the Senate 41-7

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upcoming events in the indiana senate

- February 28 - Last Day for Second Readings
- March 1 - Last Day for Third Readings
- April 29 - By law, the last day the General Assembly may be in session

ELECTIONS

Election reform bills will help prevent fraud

Voting in a fair and credible election is one of the highlights of being an American citizen, and as the state's legislative body, it is the General Assembly's responsibility to help ensure that each vote cast is valid and legal.

Several bills have been offered this year to update and improve our elections. Critics say the proposed laws could disenfranchise voters by making the process more difficult. I believe that continuing to support flimsy election laws is the real disservice to voters.

Senate Bill 14 reformats ballot layout. Current ballots list candidates by party. While that was necessary for lever voting machines that are now obsolete, an office-block ballot is more conducive to newer voting technologies. SB 14 would list candidates by office rather than party, but party affiliation still would be shown on the ballot.

Senate Bill 15 tightens restrictions on obtaining an absentee ballot. In northwest Indiana, one mayoral election was nullified due to massive absentee ballot fraud. SB 15 does not make registering to vote more difficult; it simply creates new safeguards to

protect the rights of honest absentee voters.

Senate Bill 341 makes several changes, most notably a common-sense provision allowing a challenger into the polling place. Current law prevents a challenger from entering the polls, but new state and federal laws require a challenge of voter qualifications to be held in the polls. SB 341 basically allows such challenges to be conducted.

Senate Bill 483 requires a voter to show a picture ID that has been issued by the state or federal government (such as a driver's license or state ID card). Without proof of identification, it is easy for fraudulent voters to vote under different names at different times in the day. The bill contains exemptions for those who are indigent or religiously opposed to being photographed, and it allows people without a photo ID to cast a provisional ballot.

Our election reform initiatives have the full support of Secretary of State Todd Rokita, the state's chief election officer. We hope these bills will give voters confidence that their state government is working hard to ensure that our elections will be fair, open and honest.

SENATE DISTRICT 41

Adopted April 29, 2001
Effective November 5, 2002

This map is a visual representation of the district and is only for reference purposes. For a detailed description of this district, consult the Indiana Code.

